

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 29, 1998**

The Program Policy and Structure Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Monday, June 29, 1998, at 1 p.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT) as part of the Fourth NELAC Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Pauline Bouchard of the Minnesota Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

The Committee Chair asked the Committee members to introduce themselves. Mr. Bruce Harvey introduced Ms. Helen Reading and himself as scribe and facilitator for the meeting, respectively. A sign-in sheet was passed among those attending.

Ms. Bouchard then reviewed the agenda items for the meeting. Those published previously included possible creation of a Field Measurement and Sampling Committee and maintenance of the NELAC Glossary. Additional items to those listed in the program included discussion of the term “days” (calendar vs working), NELAC’s impact on small laboratories, future interaction between NELAC and pesticide laboratories, performance based measurement systems, and the future of the committee.

REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS, AND CHAPTER 1

Ms. Bouchard then initiated a review of proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws, and Chapter 1 of the standards. Most of the additions and deletions were as a result of deliberations and discussions at the Third Interim Meeting last January.

Most of the changes to the Constitution and Bylaw were editorial in nature. However, specific wording was discussed that relates to the possible creation of the Field Measurement and Sampling Committee. The Committee will meet on Wednesday morning to determine whether this issue will be put to vote or not. If the vote is negative, all references to the proposed committee will be stricken from the Constitution and Bylaws. Ms. Bouchard noted the universal change of “will” to “shall” in the Constitution and Bylaws and Chapter 1, and asked whether this change had been made in the other chapters of the standards as well. She highlighted new wording in Article IV, Section 2 of the Bylaws that ensures that the Board of Directors will annually review the work of committees and task forces to assure that the concerns of the various constituencies (e.g. the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board [ELAB]) are being addressed. Ms. Bouchard asked that all references to “Implementation Committee” be changed to “Regulatory Compliance Committee.” She highlighted Article VI, Section 3B that first references the proposed Field Measurement and Sampling Committee. The Committee agreed at this point to this specific name for the proposed committee. Ms. Bouchard highlighted the deletion of wording in Article VI, Section 5 that might limit the formation of special subcommittees of special composition.

Proposed changes to Chapter 1 were then discussed. Most of these had been discussed at the Interim Meeting as well. Wording was added to Section 1.1.3 to identify the “Glossary” as the document where all NELAC definitions will reside. Verbiage on the proper use of the NELAC logo has been added to Section 1.1.4. There was discussion about the appropriateness of other references to the logo in Chapters 4 and 6.

Lengthy discussion was heard concerning (renumbered) Section 1.5.1.1 and references to situations where NELAP might accredit only one of an accrediting authority’s laboratories in spite of the fact that the accrediting authority might have multiple laboratories. The proposed wording was developed to cover those situations where budgetary constraints might prohibit NELAP from accrediting more than one of an accrediting authority’s laboratories. There were concerns voiced about whether EPA Regions would be consistent in how they deal with this issue. This wording is not designed to limit the accreditation to one laboratory but to allow NELAP to commit to only one accreditation when necessary.

The use of the term “recognition” instead of “reciprocity” was brought up by the audience. The Committee has discussed this issue at great length in coordination with the Accrediting Authority Committee and has evaluated the implications of using either term. NELAC has decided to retain use of the term “reciprocity.” In (renumbered) Section 1.5.3, wording has been added to address the legal impact of reciprocity on secondary accrediting authorities.

In (renumbered) Section 1.6.5 on new standing committees, there was concern expressed that the Board of Directors might establish a new committee without the approval of the full body of NELAC Voting Members. Changes to the proposed wording were effected that would clarify that Voting Members must approve any new committee before the Board can establish it and appoint members to it.

Several errors in the current version of the chapter were noted regarding references to the proposed name change for the Implementation Committee. The proposed new name is “Regulatory Coordination Committee” and not “Regulatory Compliance Committee” as listed several times in the chapter.

In (renumbered) Section 1.6.5.1, references are made to the proposed Field Measurement and Sampling Committee. Because the committee name varies throughout the document, a global search/replace will be performed so that the committee name is consistently referred to as “Field Measurement and Sampling Committee.” The issue of whether the Program Policy and Structure Committee could propose the new committee now, if it was not announced at the Interim Meeting, was considered. Other issues regarding the proposed committee included concern whether the committee would stress sampling versus field measurements (or vice versa), whether there would be separate accreditation for samplers, and whether there would be a separate chapter authored by the committee for the NELAC Standards.

Ms. Bouchard deferred to Dr. Barton Simmons, who provided some historical perspective on the work of the Ad Hoc Field Measurement and Sampling Committee. The idea of creating a standing committee on Field Measurement and Sampling was presented to the Board of Directors some time ago, that the Board of Directors gave a favorable impression to the concept, and that

the Board had always intended to include field standards. To concerns about how the proposed committee would develop standards, it was agreed that their input would be contained in a new chapter and interwoven into existing chapters as well. In support of the establishment of the new committee, it was remarked that making an Ad Hoc committee into a standing committee clarifies the charter of the former. The direction and responsibilities of the committee would also be clearer. A standing committee also has a broad base of representation that an Ad Hoc committee might not. The discussion on the Field Measurement and Sampling Committee was terminated after considerable debate for and against its establishment.¹

Ms. Bouchard asked for Committee and audience approval to go to the Thursday voting session with the recommendation that all references to the term “day” in the Standards be defined as calendar days. There were no objections.

Ms. Bouchard then reviewed the considerable work of Committee members in consolidating all relevant NELAP terms into one Glossary. It was acknowledged that work remains to be done to refine definitions and to add terms (e.g. “method” and “test method”). The need to standardize words that have multiple definitions was addressed. Some words have two valid definitions because the context of the word is very important.

EMERGING ISSUES AND THE FUTURE OF THIS COMMITTEE

Earlier this spring the committee felt its role was diminishing and that it may be time to dissolve the group. This option was presented to the Board of Directors, with the understanding that the Committee’s responsibilities would be assumed by the Board of Directors, divided up among the other existing committees, or both. The Board of Directors decided that the Committee needed to remain in existence in order to consider several emerging issues. Among these issues is a request from the American Association of Pesticide Control Officials (AAPCO), an organization representing pesticide laboratories, to deem those laboratories to be exempt from the requirements of NELAP. Ms. Bouchard recommended that a subcommittee be created and that subcommittee invite representatives of AAPCO and the pesticide laboratory community to discuss relevant issues.

A second issue for Committee consideration is the impact of the proposed NELAC Standards on the small laboratory (e.g. one with 10 employees or less). The Committee felt this issue had been discussed in the past. It was agreed that NELAC has acknowledged there might be problems and had addressed the issues as they were presented. The Committee will draft a response jointly with the Quality Systems Committee.

A third issue for future Committee work will be addressing a request from the State of Washington for NELAC to develop a model scope of accreditation.

¹ After the meeting, it was determined that the matter could not be put up for vote until the 1999 Annual Meeting (NELAC V). This determination is in conformance with Article VII, Section 7 of the Bylaws.

In addition to working with the emerging issues enumerated above, it was suggested that the Program Policy and Structure Committee might assume some of the responsibilities of the disbanded Coordinating Committee. Debate was heard regarding the mechanism for establishment of “policy” in the future, and whether the Constitution and Bylaws might need to be amended to allow for a change in the scope of responsibility of the Committee, and/or the Board.

**ACTION ITEMS
PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 29, 1998**

Item No.	Action Item	Date to be Completed
1.	Verify that “will” has been changed to “shall” in all chapters of the NELAC standards.	
2.	Ask the Board of Directors to further discuss with EPA issues regarding “conflict of interest” as they relate to limiting the number of accrediting authority laboratories assessed by EPA.	
3.	Ask the Board to consider establishment of a subcommittee to deal with AAPCO/pesticide laboratory issues.	
4.	With the Quality Systems Committee, prepare letter of response to party that brought concerns about NELAC’s impact on small laboratories to the Committee.	

PARTICIPANTS
PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 29, 1998

Name	Affiliation	Phone Numbers
Ms. Pauline Bouchard, Chair	MN Department of Health	T: (612) 623-5331 F: (612) 623-5514 E: pauline.bouchard@health.state.mn.us
Dr. Abdul-Mehdi S. Ali (absent)	Texas A&M University	T: (915) 859-1908 F: (915) 859-1078 E: a-ali101@tamu.edu
Mr. Stephen W. Clark	USEPA OW	T: (202) 260-7159 F: (202) 260-4383 E: clark.stephen@epamail.epa.gov
Dr. Marcia C. Davies	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (402) 697-2555 F: (402) 697-2595 E: marcia.c.davies@usace.army.mil
Mr. Roberta Luna	City of Longmont Water/Waste Water	T: (303) 651-8666 F: (303) 682-9543 E: colwwtp@lanm.nds.net
Mr. Tito O. Madrid (absent)	NM Environment Department, Field Operations	T: (505) 827-2855 F: (505) 827-2836 E: tito_madrid@nmenv.state.nm.us
Dr. Thomas W. McAninch	Eastman Chemical Company	T: (903) 237-5473 F: (903) 237-6395 E: twmcan@eastman.com
Ms. Marlene O. Moore	Advanced Systems, Inc.	T: (302) 834-9796 F: (302) 995-1086 E: mmoore@advancedsys.com
Mr. Jerry Parr	Catalyst Information Resources, L.L.C.	T: (303) 670-7823 F: (303) 670-2964 E: catalyst@eazy.net
Dr. Robert Stephens (absent)	CA EPA	T: (510) 540-3003 F: (510) 540-2305 E: rds3@ix.netcom.com
Mr. Bruce Harvey (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-6573 F: (919) 541-7386 E: bwh@rti.org
Ms. Helen Reading (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (202) 728-2044 F: (202) 728-2095 E: hmr@rti.org